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Aircrew member receives Distinguished Flying Cross

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28th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

ELLSWORTH AIR FORCE BASE, S.D. (ACCNS) -- Maj. Gerald Goodfellow has been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism while flying in support of Operation Allied Force.

Then a captain, Goodfellow was an instructor weapons systems officer assigned to the 77th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron, part of the 2nd Air Expeditionary Group at Royal Air Force Station Fairford in England.

The major, today the 28th Bomb Wing commander's executive officer, was the offensive systems officer on the first B-1B combat mission flying out of the deployed location, just 14 hours after the first B-1Bs arrived in theater in April 1999.

The crew had to penetrate a surface-to-air missile zone. The major said he and his crew knew the lethality of the threats and were aware that the B-1B's defense system had never been tested in combat.



Maj. Gerald Goodfellow

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During the first attack run, Goodfellow dropped 32 500-pound bombs. Following the attack, the bomb bay doors failed to close and a malfunction in the weapons system prevented further bomb drops. While he was able to fix the system malfunction, the bomb-bay doors remained open.

The crew had to decide whether to continue with the mission or head back for repairs. Due to its importance, the crew moved to the second target.

"It was high priority and needed to be taken out," Goodfellow said.

They successfully dropped nearly 20,000 pounds of bombs on the second enemy location. Then a SAM came at them. The crew used chaff, electronic countermeasures, and aircraft maneuvering to beat it. During the maneuvers to avoid the SAM, the plane was forced into the engagement zone of a second SAM, which was also defeated.

“Initially (at first indication of a SAM launch), your training kicks in. It feels very natural. You don’t really think about it until later on, after the mission is completed,” Goodfellow said. “You take on an almost business-like attitude. You have to beat that missile.”

“When I’m up there, my biggest worry isn’t about getting shot down, but about missing the target,” he said. “As a whole, the crew is concentrating as one on putting those bombs on target.”

The aggressive maneuvering and drag caused by the open bomb bay caused a significant increase in fuel use, leaving not enough fuel to get home. The crew developed a “minimum fuel” flight plan and scheduled a rendezvous with a tanker to refuel.

Goodfellow and the rest of the crew recovered the aircraft safely more than 14 hours into their first duty day, but not before getting struck by lightning, which blew off a portion of the horizontal stabilizer, and having to land in minimal visibility.

“We felt a huge relief at the completion of the mission,” Goodfellow said. “The SAMs came closer than we’d anticipated, and after thinking about it for a couple of days, we were glad to have survived.”

Goodfellow’s crew was honored for their bravery and heroism in October 2000. They received the Gen. Ira C. Eaker Award for the outstanding feat of military airmanship in Eighth Air Force for the year.

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